



FINDING  
**TRUE**  
HAPPINESS

**Marci Shimoff**, co-author of *Chicken Soup for the Woman's Soul*, shares the secret to a fulfilling life.

by Erin Casey

Here's an easy riddle. What is the one thing that every person who has ever lived has wanted? To be happy, of course. But even after all the millennia of human striving toward this goal, do we really know what makes us happy? Most people in our society are geared toward being "happy for good reason." From an early age we're conditioned to believe that when we get what we want we will be happy. "We think that when we get the car, the house, the husband, the career—then we're going to hit this thing called *happiness*," says best-selling author and transformational speaker Marci Shimoff.



"Unfortunately, that's not what's happening. In fact, in America, one out of five women is on antidepressants. We have more good reasons to be fulfilled than we've ever had before, but we're still not happy."

Marci has a different take on happiness. She believes happiness is the key to true success in life—not the other way around. She discovered this principle while collecting stories of personal transformation for a series of books she co-authored, including *Chicken Soup for the Woman's Soul*, and she shares her thoughts about it in the recently released film,

*The Secret*. After opening to international acclaim, *The Secret* has been stirring up lively discussions on talk shows such as *Larry King Live* and *The Ellen DeGeneres Show*. *The Secret* delves into the Law of Attraction, the theory that a person attracts to himself whatever thoughts, feelings, words and actions he puts out into the world. In the film, Marci, along with other authors, scientists, philosophers and entrepreneurs, shows how this law reveals the secret to joy, health, money, relationships, love and yes, happiness.

## A NEW MODEL OF HAPPINESS

Following her passion to explore, study and share what it means to be happy, Marci has found a new model. "There is something deeper than being happy for good reason," she says. "I call it being happy for no reason. It's a baseline state of happiness—a lasting neuro-physiological state of peace and well-being. Research shows that each person has a happiness set point, much like we have a weight set point." Most people reach a weight that is maintained with little effort, she explains. "You might go up or down by 10 pounds, but you usually hover around that same weight unless you consciously do something to change your metabolism.

## Being happy for no reason is about finding an inner state of happiness.

"In the same way, we have a happiness set point that we hover around. If bad things happen, it might affect your happiness for a while, but over time you're going to rebound back to your normal happiness set point." Marci says the same is true when people experience good things. "You can get the great job or the great relationship, and you think you've got it made. You'll feel good for a little while, but in time you'll go back to your original happiness set point unless you consciously do things to change that."

Taking conscious action to be happy is the subject of Marci's upcoming book, *Happy for No Reason: 7 Steps to Being Happier Right Now*. In it she reveals what we can do to change our happiness set point, based on cutting-edge happiness research and the stories of genuinely happy people. "There is an old saying, 'Success leaves clues,'" Marci says. "We study the lives of successful people and can clearly see those clues in their habits. The main difference between people who are successful and those who aren't is their habits. Habits are everything."

Marci has found that the same is true of happiness: "Happiness also leaves clues. And the main difference between people who are happy on a long-term basis and those who aren't is that they have habits that enable them to sustain a deeper neuro-physiological state of happiness. Researchers have found that 50 percent of our happiness is genetic and 50 percent is learned." According to Marci, the exciting news is that, by understanding how to maximize what we've been given genetically while also mastering new happiness-inducing habits, we can raise our happiness set point.



### HAPPINESS: A PHYSICAL, MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL RESPONSE

Our physical bodies and our emotional and mental well-being are closely related. “I am convinced that our biochemistry affects our happiness greatly,” Marci says. One physical way to increase our happiness is to exercise regularly. In addition to contributing to better overall health, the endorphins released as a result of exercise help us feel better emotionally and mentally, as well. “Taking care of our bodies is critical,” she says.

“The main difference between people who are successful and those who aren’t is their habits. Habits are everything.” —*Marci Shimoff*

Another significant aspect of happiness has to do with emotions. “We’re finding that the emotional states of the heart have a tremendous impact on our brain and body chemistry,” Marci says.

### THE POWER OF FEELING GRATEFUL

While improving our emotional state of well-being may not be as simple as walking on a treadmill, it is equally important. One

simple way to begin is by cultivating the feeling of gratitude daily. Referencing the work done by the Institute of HeartMath, Marci explains our stress levels can be decreased and level of happiness increased



when we live in a state of gratitude and appreciation.

“When we experience gratitude and appreciation in our heart, we create a state of *coherence* throughout the body that dramatically affects happiness levels,” she says. “One of the exercises I recommend to everyone is to become aware of five things that



you are grateful for every morning when you wake up and every night before you go to sleep.

As you get up, say thank you for this day and *feel* the gratitude.

improves our health, energy level and general well-being. When you get into the habit of feeling gratitude, it becomes automatic and you experience happiness on a more permanent basis.”

Marci also explains that gratitude and appreciation are more effective when we feel them rather than just think about them, because feelings have such a deep influence on us. “What I found in

“We have more good reasons to be fulfilled than we’ve ever had before, but we’re still not happy.”

—Marci Shimoff

And before you go to sleep, review the day and identify what you are grateful for. Studies show that focusing on gratitude

working on the *Chicken Soup for the Soul* books is that people want to feel emotionally moved—they crave heartfelt inspiration. In our society, we are bombarded by negativity and bad news, and we crave positive stories that will touch and inspire us. That’s why *Chicken Soup for the Soul* has been such a phenomenal success,” she says. And while the stories found in the *Chicken Soup* series do inspire people,

### 3 Steps to Success

For many years, Marci Shimoff had a goal, an intention, to inspire and empower millions of people around the world to live to their highest potential. As a professional speaker and corporate trainer, she shared her message with thousands, but she wanted to make a bigger impact on the world. “I spent a lot of time focusing my attention on big success,” she says. “There’s a saying, ‘What we focus on grows stronger in our lives.’ I know that is absolutely true.” But visualizing her success wasn’t enough to make it reality.

At that point in her career, a friend and advisor, Bill Levacy, taught her a powerful three-step formula to apply the Law of Attraction: 1) intention 2) attention and 3) no tension. Marci was clear about her *intention* to empower millions. She knew the importance of putting her *attention*, her focus, on what she wanted. She

would spend time working toward her goal both physically—by seeking out opportunities to speak and write—and mentally and emotionally—by visualizing her success and feeling what it would be like when she actually achieved her dream.

“I had a good deal of success, but it wasn’t happening on the scale that I wanted it to happen and I felt stuck,” Marci says. After doing the “right things” for so many years, she finally realized she needed to take the third step, *no tension*.

“I decided to go away for seven days on a silent meditation retreat and take a break from trying so hard,” she says. “Often we spend a lot of time focusing, focusing, focusing; putting our attention on what we want. What we don’t do is let go and relax.” On the fourth day of her retreat, Marci had what she calls a “lightbulb

moment.” “In the middle of meditation, the words *Chicken Soup for the Woman’s Soul* popped into my head,” she says. At that time, only the first *Chicken Soup for the Soul* had been published. “It was a breakthrough idea and as soon as it came to me, I knew it was a winner. Jack Canfield, the co-creator of *Chicken Soup for the Soul*, had been my mentor for a number of years, and it was all I could do not to call him during the last three days of the silent retreat!”

The result of putting the three steps—intention, attention and no tension—into action? For Marci it was a contract that led to six *New York Times* best-sellers that sold more than 13 million copies. “That wouldn’t have happened if I hadn’t done all three of those steps—any two of them wouldn’t do it,” she says. “To me this is the most practical formula for creating what you want in your life. It works.”

they are an impermanent fix. “I have found that people love these stories, but they don’t have a way to maintain the feeling of inspiration and happiness” Marci says. “That’s what my follow-up book, *Happy for No Reason*, is about—gaining new habits of happiness through inspiring stories and practical techniques.”

## HAPPINESS AND THE LAW OF ATTRACTION

The old model was about *finding* happiness, but Marci’s focus is on helping people *create* and *maintain* high levels of happiness. Not only is feeling good important to a person’s well-being, the



Law of Attraction tells us that what a person feels is what he attracts into his life. “Whatever we think about, feel and visualize is what we attract, as if we were magnets,” Marci says. “We bring to us whatever it is we are sending out. Not just from our minds, but also from our hearts—what we’re feeling, what we’re picturing, what we’re envisioning.”

How we feel about the world, and even more importantly, about ourselves—that is, our self-esteem—determines what the Law of

Attraction brings us. “When our self-esteem is low, we can’t attract what we want, because we feel we don’t deserve it,” Marci says. “When we feel happy inside (happy for no reason), this is true self-esteem. This is not based on appearances or achievements, but on the internal belief that as individuals we are lovable, worthy and capable, regardless of external circumstances. When we have high self-esteem, we draw to us, according to the Law of Attraction, the good we feel we deserve.”

And much like happiness, self-esteem can be raised by caring for our physical, mental and emotional well-being. Exercising regularly and feeling gratitude for the things and people with which our lives

**People attract to themselves whatever thoughts, feelings, words and actions they put out into the world.**

have been blessed can help increase not only our level of happiness but our self-esteem as well. “Anytime you’re raising your happiness level, you are also raising your self-esteem,” Marci says.

Being happy for no reason is about finding an inner state of happiness. “It’s taking things a step further. Rather than focusing on getting all of the things you want in order to be happy, say instead, ‘Let me be happy in this moment, whatever the circumstances. Let me create for myself this inner state of being happy for no reason.’ And when you do create your own happiness in this way, all of the things you really want will come to you,” Marci says. “But at that point the things are just icing on the cake because you’re not relying on your circumstances to make you happy—you are living from an inner state of happiness.” That’s when you know you’ve found the one thing humankind has sought for millennia. EW

*Marci Shimoff is a celebrated transformational leader and one of the nation’s leading motivational experts who has inspired millions of people around the world by sharing her breakthrough methods for personal fulfillment and professional success. President and co-founder of the Esteem Group, she delivers keynote addresses and seminars on*



*self-empowerment and peak performance to corporations, women’s associations and professional and nonprofit organizations. As the co-author of six of the top-selling titles in the Chicken Soup for the Soul series, including Chicken Soup for the Woman’s Soul and Chicken Soup for the Mother’s Soul, her books have met with stunning success, selling more than 13 million copies worldwide in 33 languages. Learn more at [www.marcishimoff.com](http://www.marcishimoff.com).*